Report of the
Mayor's Task Force on
Neighborhood Land Use

VACANT LAND

TASK FORCE
Scott Hodes, Chair
Lauren E. Allen, Vice-Chair

CITY OF CHICAGO
Harold Washington, Mayor

The Mayor's Task Force

In January 1986, Mayor Harold Washington established a citizens Task Force to make recommendations to his administration regarding a number of land-use issues:

- Vacant Land Reuse
- Boulevard Restoration
- High-Rise/High-Density Development
- Neighborhood Commercial and Industrial Revitalization
- Residential Care Facility Siting

Copies of the five Mayor's Task Force reports are available from the Department of Planning, 10th Floor, City Hall, Chicago, Illinois.

Taken together, these five issues span the range of land-use problems that are found in mature urban areas such as Chicago.

The Task Force's 65 members represent a cross section of the community. They are drawn from neighborhood organizations, civic and business groups, government agencies, and academia. Staff support was provided principally by the city's Department of Planning, as well as by the city's departments of Economic Development, Housing, Human Services and Zoning.

While the Task Force has concluded its activity, the work of implementing its recommendations must now begin with the participation of all Chicagoans. We urge neighborhood groups, developers and government agencies to join together in this effort.

Vacant Land

A Report from the
Mayor's Task Force on
Neighborhood Land Use

VACANT LAND

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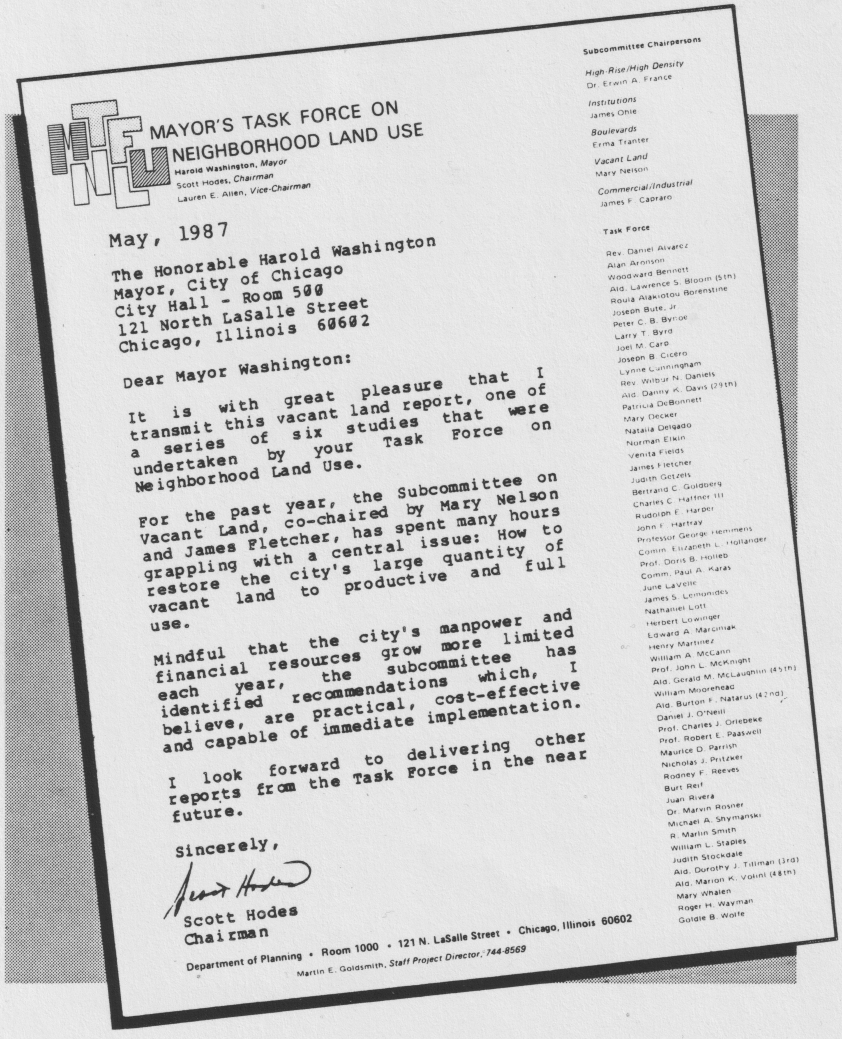
Vacant Land Subcommittee, Co-Chairs
Mary Nelson
James Fletcher



MAYOR'S TASK FORCE ON
NEIGHBORHOOD LAND USE
Harold Washington, *Mayor*
Scott Hodes, *Chairman*
Lauren E. Allen, *Vice-Chairman*

May, 1987

The Honorable Harold Washington
Mayor, City of Chicago
City Hall - Room 500
121 North LaSalle Street
Chicago, Illinois 60602

Dear Mayor Washington:

It is with great pleasure that I transmit this vacant land report, one of a series of six studies that were undertaken by your Task Force on Neighborhood Land Use.

For the past year, the Subcommittee on Vacant Land, co-chaired by Mary Nelson and James Fletcher, has spent many hours grappling with a central issue: How to restore the city's large quantity of vacant land to productive and full use.

Mindful that the city's manpower and financial resources grow more limited each year, the subcommittee has identified recommendations which, I believe, are practical, cost-effective and capable of immediate implementation.

I look forward to delivering other reports from the Task Force in the near future.

Sincerely,

Scott Hodes
Chairman

Department of Planning • Room 1000 • 121 N. LaSalle Street • Chicago, Illinois 60602
Martin E. Goldsmith, *Staff Project Director*, 744-8569

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VACANT
LAND

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The Problem

VACANT LAND

In the right place--for instance, along our city's lakefront or in the heart of the Loop--vacant urban land is seen as an opportunity. In the one instance, it is treasured open space at the city's front door. In the second, it's a valuable development site.

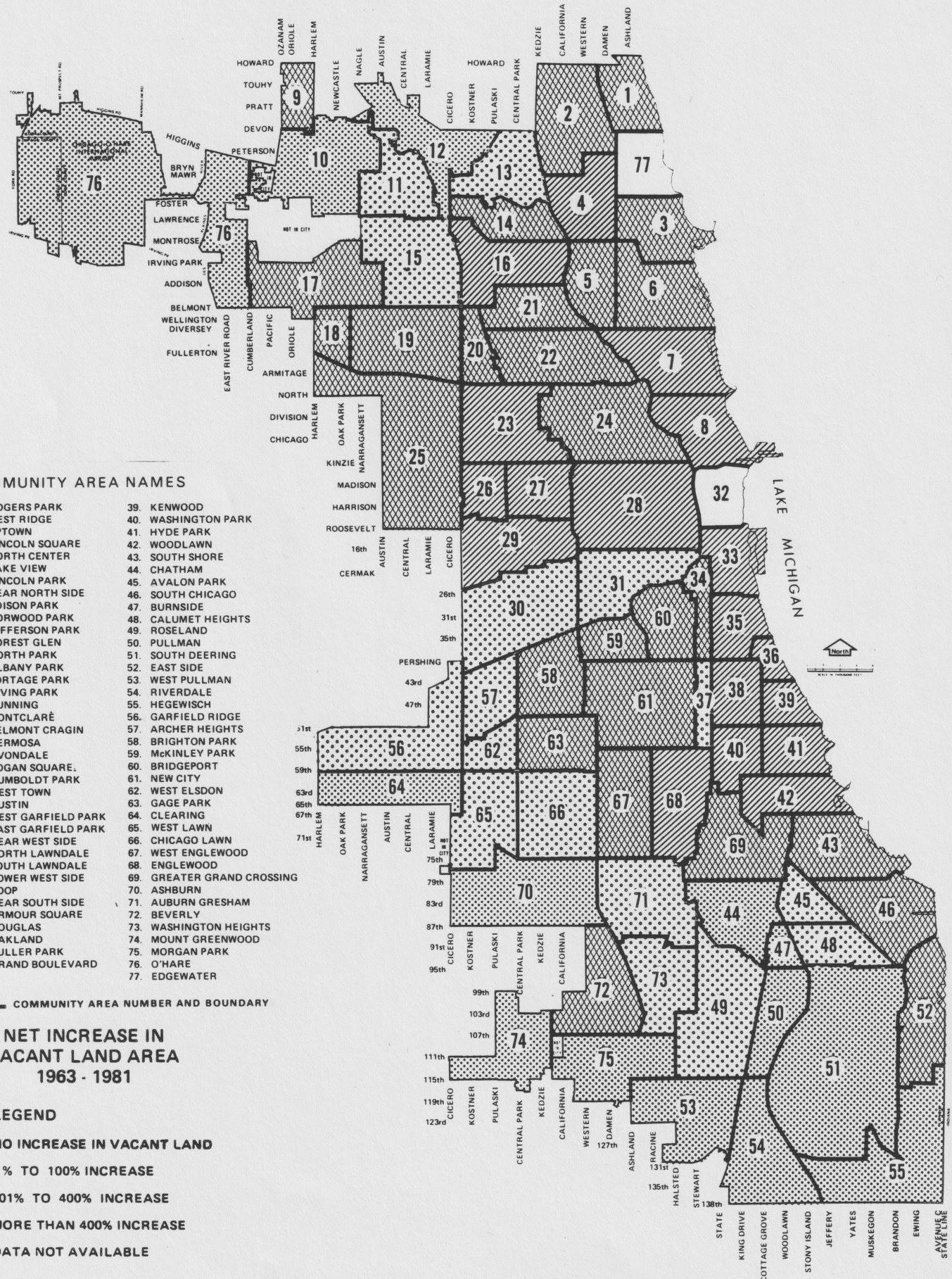
Yet, in the wrong location--such as in scattered locations throughout our city's neighborhoods--vacant lots are viewed far differently. More often than not, they are looked at as a blighting influence.

Because vacant land is of such paramount importance, the Mayor's Task Force on Neighborhood Land Use made it one of the subjects of its recently completed, year-long study. A vacant land subcommittee researched the subject, identified key issues, and has made specific recommendations for solving some of those problems. The report, we also hope, will answer such questions as:

- Do we have to accept the belief that vacant, junk land is a fact of life in our neighborhoods?
- Is there anything we can do to return vacant land to productive use?
- What can be done on an interim basis if there is no immediate market for the land?

During the 1960s and 1970s, Chicago, along with many other large cities, experienced a substantial increase in the amount of vacant land in its neighborhoods (see map, p. 2). Where once there had been homes and retail shops, now there were yawning gaps filled with abandoned cars, refuse, and overgrown weeds.

In addition to its interviews with the public and private sector in Chicago, the Vacant Land Subcommittee examined programs in numerous other large cities.



COMMUNITY AREA NAMES

1. ROGERS PARK
2. WEST RIDGE
3. UPTOWN
4. LINCOLN SQUARE
5. NORTH CENTER
6. LAKE VIEW
7. LINCOLN PARK
8. NEAR NORTH SIDE
9. EDISON PARK
10. NORWOOD PARK
11. JEFFERSON PARK
12. FOREST GLEN
13. NORTH PARK
14. ALBANY PARK
15. PORTAGE PARK
16. IRVING PARK
17. DUNNING
18. MONTCLARE
19. BELMONT CRAGIN
20. HERMOSA
21. AVONDALE
22. LOGAN SQUARE
23. HUMBOLDT PARK
24. WEST TOWN
25. AUSTIN
26. WEST GARFIELD PARK
27. EAST GARFIELD PARK
28. NEAR WEST SIDE
29. NORTH LAWNDALE
30. SOUTH LAWNDALE
31. LOWER WEST SIDE
32. LOOP
33. NEAR SOUTH SIDE
34. ARMOUR SQUARE
35. DOUGLAS
36. OAKLAND
37. FULLER PARK
38. GRAND BOULEVARD
39. KENWOOD
40. WASHINGTON PARK
41. HYDE PARK
42. WOODLAWN
43. SOUTH SHORE
44. CHATHAM
45. AVALON PARK
46. SOUTH CHICAGO
47. BURNSIDE
48. CALUMET HEIGHTS
49. ROSELAND
50. PULLMAN
51. SOUTH DEERING
52. EAST SIDE
53. WEST PULLMAN
54. RIVERDALE
55. HEGEWISCH
56. GARFIELD RIDGE
57. ARCHER HEIGHTS
58. BRIGHTON PARK
59. McKINLEY PARK
60. BRIDGEPORT
61. NEW CITY
62. WEST ELSDON
63. GAGE PARK
64. CLEARING
65. WEST LAWN
66. CHICAGO LAWN
67. WEST ENGLEWOOD
68. ENGLEWOOD
69. GREATER GRAND CROSSING
70. ASHBURN
71. AUBURN GRESHAM
72. BEVERLY
73. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS
74. MOUNT GREENWOOD
75. MORGAN PARK
76. O'HARE
77. EDGEWATER

65 COMMUNITY AREA NUMBER AND BOUNDARY

NET INCREASE IN VACANT LAND AREA 1963 - 1981

LEGEND

- NO INCREASE IN VACANT LAND
- 1 % TO 100% INCREASE
- 101% TO 400% INCREASE
- MORE THAN 400% INCREASE
- DATA NOT AVAILABLE

The amount of vacant land in the city rose during the 1970s by almost 35 percent. In fact, by 1981, Chicago had an estimated 19.1 square miles of vacant land--an area nearly twice the size of O'Hare Airport. While much of this land was concentrated in large industrial areas (such as Lake Calumet on the city's far south side), the amount of vacant land in residential areas also was mushrooming.

It is estimated that nearly half of the city's surplus land is located in its residential and mixed commercial-residential neighborhoods. Some of these vacant lots are privately owned, but many are in public hands. Of the latter, the greatest number--at least 7,000 parcels--are owned by the City of Chicago.

Once viewed as an opportunity, vacant land in most neighborhoods is seen as a symptom of decline and disinvestment.

Most typically, this land can be found in scattered lots throughout the city's south and west sides. In fact, close to 90 percent of the city's vacant land in 1981 was located south of North Avenue, as shown in the accompanying map.

The presence of this bank of unwanted vacant land comes at a significant public price. The city's total annual property tax losses--traceable to underused land, tax-exempt ownership, or tax delinquency--may range into the millions of dollars. The losses from tax delinquency alone are estimated to exceed $600,000 annually.

In addition, the City of Chicago spends over $1 million each year to clear vacant lots of rubbish and abandoned cars. Yet, this amount is able to meet only a small fraction of the need. Despite increased clean-up efficiencies, these costs will remain high until more land is returned to private ownership.

The City of Chicago spends more than $1 million each year to clear vacant lots of rubbish and abandoned cars. Yet, even at this rate, it can meet only a fraction of the upkeep needs.

Still, it is the city's neighborhood residents who experience the most direct influence of these vacant lots. Illegally dumped rubbish, abandoned cars, health and safety hazards, and depressed neighborhood property values--this is the very real evidence of vacant land. Instead of attracting new investment, vacant lots in residential neighborhoods far too often serve as strong deterrents to revitalization.

Nevertheless, vacant land--wherever it is located--offers the potential for new development. The Vacant Land Subcommittee believes this potential can and must be tapped to strengthen and revitalize our neighborhoods. At the same time, we feel the city's neighborhoods can draw immediate short-term benefits through the temporary use of these lots.

In recognition of these aims, the primary goal of our subcommittee has been to identify methods through which the city, working with community-based organizations and the private sector, can put our vacant land back to work for our neighborhoods.

Even small lots can be recycled effectively, as long as financial and legal impediments are overcome.

The Issues

To learn more about this issue--both its problems and its potential--the Vacant Land Subcommittee consulted extensively with experts in the public and private sectors over a 10-month period.

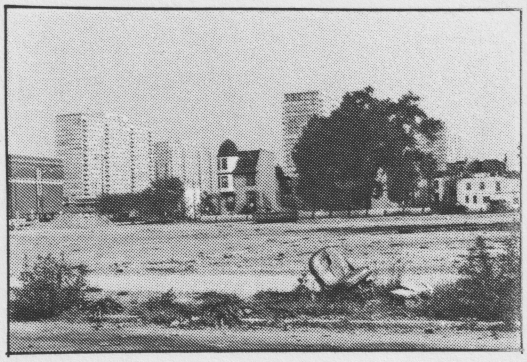
For information about public initiatives, the subcommittee interviewed high-level officials in the city's departments of Law, Housing, Inspectional Services, Economic Development, and Streets and Sanitation.

Various members of the City Council provided constructive suggestions for streamlining the city's land sale procedures. Also consulted were the Cook County Assessor's Office and the county's Office of Economic Development.

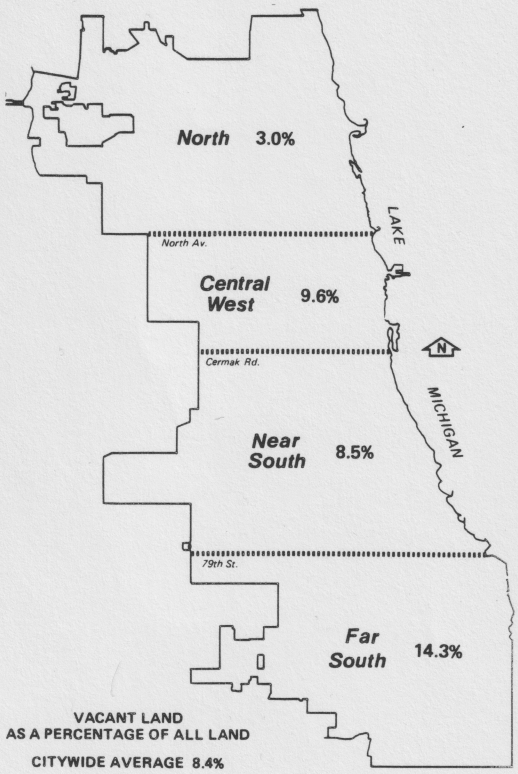
A study by the city's Department of Planning, Vacant Land in Chicago, provided basic information on the distribution of vacant land throughout the city. The study also provided estimates of the fiscal burden borne by the city because of vacant land.

The subcommittee sought input from the private sector as well. Local developers presented proposals for leasing programs and special development incentives. The Open Lands Project, one of the organizations that was a member of the Mayor's Task Force, contributed valuable information on vacant land programs and public redevelopment models in other cities.

The subcommittee examined programs in Baltimore, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Milwaukee, New York, Philadelphia, and St. Louis, among other cities. Those investigations identified the successes that several cities had with sophisticated inventory and marketing programs for surplus land.



VACANT LAND



According to one estimate, there were over 19 square miles of vacant land in Chicago in 1981--an area nearly twice the size of O'Hare Airport.

But most importantly, the subcommittee invited the participation of Chicago's neighborhood organizations. A questionnaire was sent to organizations in areas with severe land vacancy problems. Finally, a public workshop was held to receive direct input from the most affected communities.

As a result of these investigations, the Vacant Land Subcommittee was able to achieve a clear consensus on the most critical vacant land problems. Those areas of concern were:

<u>The difficulty in returning publicly held vacant land to private ownership</u>.

The city now owns more than 7,000 dispersed vacant lots, located mainly in residential areas. And the number is growing. Most of these parcels were acquired through foreclosures on demolition liens, following the city's demolition of hazardous or severely deteriorated buildings.

The city would prefer to return most of this land to private ownership, but the existing public sales process is lengthy and complex. Repeated city council action is required, and it frequently takes a year or longer for an individual parcel to be sold. Moreover, the asking price for a vacant parcel--based on outside appraisals--often far exceeds the actual market value.

The City of Chicago now owns at least 7,000 dispersed vacant lots, most of them located in residential areas. And the number is growing.

A special city program, the Adjacent Neighbors Land Acquisition Program (ANLAP, see page 22) has enabled some city-owned lots to be sold to neighboring homeowners at a reduced cost. In 1985, the city's Department of Housing revamped its procedures for ANLAP in order to permit quicker processing and increased participation. However, at best only a small minority of lots can qualify under the program.

The lack of an accurate, comprehensive, and readily accessible data base on vacant land.

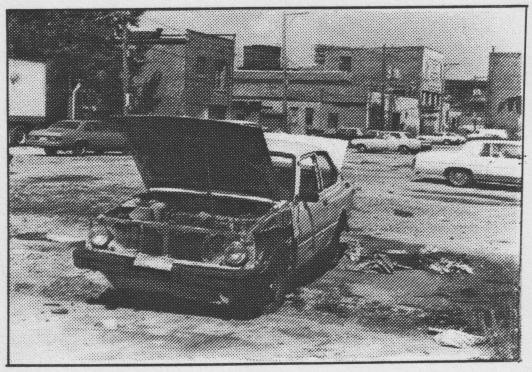
One of the problems the subcommittee immediately confronted was that no public agency currently maintains a centralized, up-to-date inventory of all vacant lots in Chicago. Nor does any single city agency maintain full records on all city-owned lots. Land data are incomplete and fragmented among a number of city and county agencies. These serious problems impede any efforts to upgrade programs for marketing, planning, or maintaining the city's surplus vacant land.

The need to prevent safety hazards and the blighting effects caused by vacant land.

Too often, vacant lots become magnets for illegal "fly-dumping" of refuse and abandoned cars. The safety hazards and other detrimental effects posed by these vacant lots have a severe effect on surrounding neighborhoods.

In 1986, the Washington administration consolidated all vacant lot upkeep programs, a move that will enable the clean up of about 3,000 lots annually. It also has started a program to install railroad ties at the front and rear of vacant lots as a way of discouraging illegal dumping.

But the growing amount of vacant land has strapped the city's resources for cleaning and maintenance of these lots. In addition, local government has not played a major role in putting these lots to such productive interim uses as gardens or playlots.



Vacant lots, if unsecured and untended, too often attract abandoned cars and illegal fly-dumping of refuse.

The lack of intergovernmental cooperation in the disposition of tax delinquent land.

Cook County's current procedures for its tax and scavenger sales are complex and time-consuming. As a result, neighborhood residents and organizations are effectively discouraged from acquiring abandoned or vacant property that is tax-delinquent.

The county's Multi-Family Tax Reactivation Program, which is the only existing mechanism for conveying scavenger sale properties at low cost to not-for-profit organizations, has not been applicable to vacant land. As yet, the city has not been able to intervene directly in the process, but is currently working to broaden the program to vacant land.

No single city agency maintains full records on all city-owned lots. Data are incomplete and fragmented among a number of city and county agencies.

The lack of available resources for neighborhoods with the most severe vacant land problems.

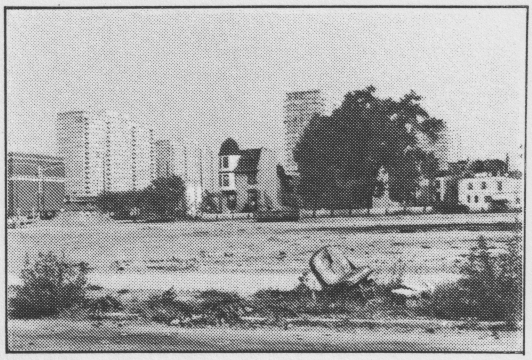
As stated earlier, a sizable number of vacant residential lots are located in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. However, many of the neighborhood organizations in those areas lack the necessary resources and expertise for attracting new investment to vacant land.

Disposition procedures for tax-delinquent or publicly owned land are not very effective in areas with a weak real estate market. And to compound the problem, the small size of the lots prevalent in many of these neighborhoods--generally less than 35 feet wide --poses a difficult redevelopment problem.

The continued growth of unwanted, new vacant land.

The rise in the amount of vacant land during the 1960s and 1970s was largely the outgrowth of a continuing process of disinvestment, deterioration, and abandonment. In 1985, the city instituted the Housing Abandonment Prevention Program, which helps owners, tenants and community organizations halt the deterioration of viable housing stock. But, despite the success of this and other programs, demolitions are still occurring in many low- and moderate-income communities.

Recommendations



VACANT LAND

There is near unanimity among neighborhood leaders on one point: Vacant land is a prime resource for community revitalization. But how can its potential be realized?

Above all else, the subcommittee found, there must be a coordinated effort between local government, the neighborhoods, and the private sector. Such an effort demands initiatives in the following areas.

1. <u>Reduce the city's inventory of unproductive vacant land by beefing up existing disposition programs</u>.

   Vacant land that is of no long term use to the city should be identified and returned to private ownership. To do this, the city must:

   - Approve a city ordinance for streamlining land sales procedures, and ensure that sales go before the City Council only once for final approval. The change can be made by invoking the city's home rule powers. New state legislation is not necessary.

   - Expand the range of programs for disposing of city-owned land. Short- and long-term leases are viable options, but they have been little used in the past. Among the other alternatives: donations or negotiated sales at less than fair market value to not-for-profit organizations or neighborhood land banks.

The existing City sales process is lengthy and complex. Sales should go before the City Council only once for final approval.

- Create a comprehensive marketing program to support these land disposition initiatives. For example, the city of Montreal has produced a marketing packet that lists all available vacant lots, along with such necessary information as public services, transportation routes, etc.

Identify five target areas for a comprehensive pilot program. Work directly with community-based organizations.

- Sell a minimum of 200 lots per year under the city's Adjacent Neighbors Land Acquisition Program. Work directly with community-based organizations to target specific neighborhoods. The city of Baltimore has had success with its Adopt-a-Lot program, which is aimed directly at community-based groups.

- Create new guidelines for appraisals so that the asking prices for city lots reflect the real market conditions in low- and moderate-income communities. The city's Department of Housing should be empowered to set sale prices for the smaller, less marketable lots, those that tend to be overvalued by the conventional appraisal process.

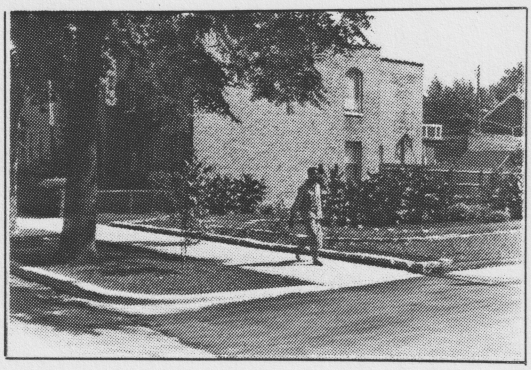
Create appraisal guidelines, in order that asking prices for city lots reflect real market conditions in neighborhoods. Lease city-owned vacant lots on a short-term basis to block clubs and civic associations for gardens, play lots, and other interim uses.

2. <u>Create an all-inclusive, publicly accessible, and regularly updated inventory of all vacant land.</u>

This inventory should include complete data on ownership, tax status, and other important conditions. The city and county should join forces to:

- Consolidate Cook County's tax and ownership data for privately owned properties with the city's records for city-owned land.
- Design a computerized data system that has the capability for regular updating, easy public access, and suitability for marketing land to private or neighborhood-based developers. Some private firms already maintain computerized property records, as do several cities, including Cincinnati. The private and public sectors both should be consulted in the design of this system.
- Devise a classification system for vacant lots in order that informed decisions about management or disposition can be made. This system should be based on market value, tax/ownership status, location, and the like.
- Develop a method for disseminating inventory information to community-based organizations and other interested parties. One possibility is to tap the resources of the Case Watch Program, an existing program that regularly updates Building Court cases for neighborhood groups.

Several large cities, as well as private companies, maintain computerized property record systems. The use of such a system for vacant land would be an invaluable marketing aid in Chicago.



3. <u>Eliminate the safety hazards and blighting effects of existing vacant lots by working directly with community groups</u>.

Neighborhood-based upkeep programs can be more effective and less costly than highly centralized programs. The city should involve neighborhoods in the following ways:

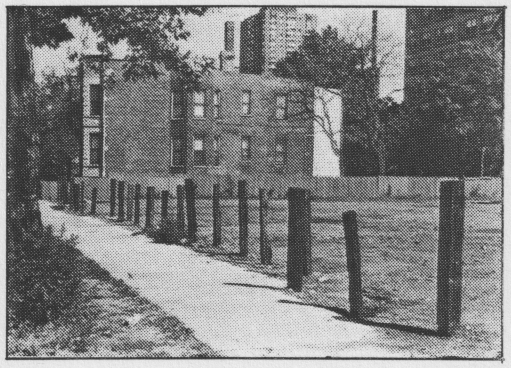
- Lease city-owned vacant lots on a short-term basis to block clubs, civic associations, and homeowners for gardens, play-lots, parking, and other interim uses.

- Provide railroad ties or fencing as a method for discouraging "fly dumping" on vacant lots. Expand distribution of garden supplies to those wishing to improve vacant lots.

- Provide sites for bulk dumping as an alternative to uncontrolled dumping of refuse. Establish locally based clean-up programs.

- Require, under ordinance, regular maintenance of lots by private owners.

- Rewrite the city's contract demolition specifications to require a top layer of soil or grass on demolition sites. Also require lot enclosures, either with fencing or railroad ties. Improve the monitoring of demolition contracts through the use of community-based organizations.



The City now installs railroad ties around vacant lots to protect them from uncontrolled dumping.

4. Restore tax delinquent land to responsible ownership.

The Cook County scavenger and annual tax sales should be improved in the following ways:

- Actively apply the county's Multi-Family Tax Reactivation Program to vacant lots. This will allow the land to be conveyed at no cost to responsible community-based developers. Also, consider using the city's home rule powers to further ease the transfer of properties under the program.

- Reduce the scavenger sale's tax delinquency qualification period from five to two years.

- Shorten the annual tax sale's redemption period from two years to one.

- Offer tax abatements to purchasers of property under the annual tax sale.

- Investigate the feasibility of establishing a separate, self-financing land reutilization authority. This group, which could be set up under state statute, independent of city and county government, would have direct acquisition and disposition powers for tax delinquent land. Such an authority operates effectively in St. Louis, where it sells and develops vacant city land.

Restoring tax delinquent property to responsible ownership could save the City nearly half a million dollars annually.

5. Enable community-based organizations to take a direct role in redeveloping vacant land.

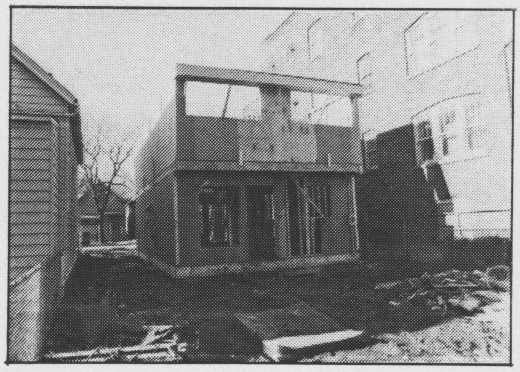
There are a number of ways in which the city can help these organizations at minimal public expense.

- Create how-to brochures and/or workshops on lot recycling and redevelopment. Tap existing technical assistance resources as part of this effort; for instance, the Chicago Rehab Network and the Open Lands Project.

- Aggressively market vacant land and any available financing programs. Do so through brochures, neighborhood real estate listings, and the like.

- Work with neighborhood-based groups in assembling and/or developing vacant land. One alternative might be the establishment of "neighborhood land banks," which could acquire surplus public land, while assuming responsibility for upkeep and long-range development.

- Apply creative financing techniques, such as Tax Increment Financing, to the problems of vacant land redevelopment. The small, scattered lots that dot many low- and moderate-income neighborhoods demand specialized approaches. Zoning and building code modifications also may be needed in order to lessen construction costs.



6. Discourage the creation of any additional, unwanted vacant land.

In order to build on its existing efforts, the city should:

- Institute a board-up or brick-up program for vacant buildings, as has been used with widespread success in several large cities.

- Strengthen existing code enforcement against negligent property owners.

- Extend the Housing Abandonment Prevention Program, while strengthening the existing public information program for identifying at-risk buildings. Monitor heating shut-offs, Building Court cases, and tax delinquency.

- Renew efforts for passage of state legislation that would grant cities "quick take" acquisition powers. This legislation would enable local governments to take over problem buildings before they require demolition. Community-based organizations should be involved directly in the marketing efforts for these buildings.

- Expand the eligibility list for such financing programs as Energy Savers, city-held purchase money mortgages, and federal Community Development Block Grant funding.

- Identify five target areas for a comprehensive pilot program that would help focus the above recommendations. Work directly with community-based organizations.

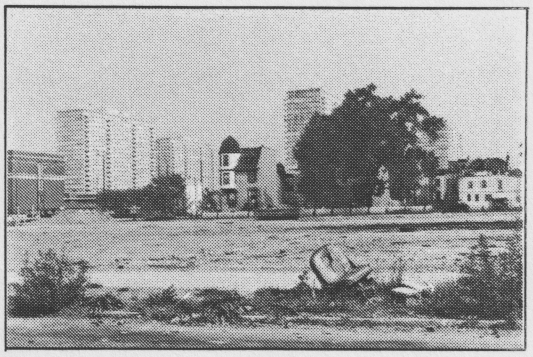
Summary of Recommendations

OBJECTIVES	TASKS	IMPLEMENTING AGENCY
1. Reduce the city's backlog of unproductive vacant land by beefing up existing programs.	- Pass an ordinance to streamline city land sales procedures.	Departments of Planning Housing and Law/City Council
	- Expand land disposition programs.	Department of Housing
	- Create a comprehensive marketing program.	Department of Housing
	- Sell at least 200 lots per year under ANLAP.	Department of Housing
	- Revise standards for appraisals to reflect real market conditions.	Department of Housing/ Mayor's Real Estate Review Committee
2. Create an all-inclusive, publicly accessible and regularly updated inventory of all vacant land.	- Consolidate city and county records on vacant land.	Cook County Assessor/ Department of Housing
	- Design a computerized data system.	Departments of Planning and Law/private sector
	- Devise a system of classifying lots by market value, location, etc.	Department of Housing
	- Develop a method of disseminating inventory information to neighborhoods.	Department of Planning

OBJECTIVES	TASKS	IMPLEMENTING AGENCY
3. Eliminate the safety hazards and blighting effects of existing vacant lots by working directly with community groups.	- Lease city-owned lots for productive short-term uses.	Department of Housing
	- Make garden supplies freely available.	Department of Housing/Park District/private sector
	- Set up locally based clean-up programs and bulk deposit sites.	Department of Streets and Sanitation
	- Require, under ordinance, regular lot maintenance.	City Council
	- Rewrite demolition specifications to ease later construction.	Departments of Inspectional Services and Purchasing
4. Restore tax delinquent land to responsible ownership.	- Extend Tax Reactivation Program to vacant lots.	Cook County Board
	- Reduce scavenger sale qualification period to two years.	State Legislature
	- Shorten redemption period under annual tax sale to one year.	State Legislature
	- Offer tax abatements to buyers under annual tax sale.	Cook County Assessor
	- Investigate feasibility of establishing independent land reutilization authority.	Departments of Planning, Housing and Law/Mayor's Office

OBJECTIVES	TASKS	IMPLEMENTING AGENCY
5. Enable community-based organizations to take a direct role in redeveloping vacant land.	- Create how-to brochures and workshops on lot redevelopment.	Department of Housing
	- Aggressively market available land and financing programs.	Department of Housing
	- Work with neighborhood-based groups in assembling and redeveloping vacant land.	Departments of Housing and Planning
	- Apply creative financing techniques to land redevelopment problems	Departments of Housing and Planning
6. Discourage the creation of any additional, unwanted vacant land.	- Institute a board-up or brick-up program for abandoned buildings.	Departments of Housing and Inspectional Services
	- Strengthen code enforcement against negligent owners.	Departments of Inspectional Services and Law
	- Expand HAPP and associated programs.	Department of Housing
	- Renew efforts to pass "quick take" enabling legislation.	Mayor's Office/State Legislature
	- Broaden financial assistance for building preservation.	Department of Housing
	- Set up pilot program in five community areas.	Departments of Housing and Planning

How to Get Involved



VACANT LAND

The vacant land issue is a formidable one. But that hasn't stopped various government agencies and community groups from dealing with it. The Vacant Land Subcommittee has identified numerous programs that either reutilize vacant land or prevent it from getting to that point in the first place.

Many of the programs listed below were established by the City of Chicago. Others were initiated by community groups, private individuals, or other government agencies. Here are suggested contacts for various questions you might have about vacant land.

How to clean up vacant lots

A recent consolidation of the city's upkeep programs for vacant lots will enable the clean up of 3,000 parcels this year.

Traditionally, the responsibility for the upkeep of vacant lots has been split between separate bureaus in the Department of Streets and Sanitation. In 1986, for the first time, all lot clean-up programs were consolidated under the Bureau of Rodent Control. The reorganized program, which was budgeted at approximately $1 million last year, was expected to clean up about 3,000 publicly and privately owned lots, including some repeat visits.

The department also has instituted a special program to deter future dumping. This involves the installation of railroad ties at the front and rear of vacant lots.

For information on these programs, contact:

Bureau of Rodent Control
Department of Streets and Sanitation
City of Chicago
744-6465

But perhaps the most effective clean-up programs are those that are neighborhood-initiated and managed. In North Lawndale, for instance, several neighbors organized a cadre of volunteers whom they dubbed the "Slum Busters." The crew, which now numbers more than forty children and adults, spent its weekends last summer cleaning away trash and weeds from the neighborhood's vacant lots. Afterwards, the debris was replaced by grass and flowers.

How to create gardens in vacant lots

Gardening programs have been sponsored for more than ten years by several local government agencies. One of the most successful programs is one that was started by the Chicago Housing Authority in 1973. As many as 6,000 gardeners have participated from CHA projects across the city.

Gardens are an interim use that improves neighborhoods at minimal cost.

The city's Department of Human Services sponsors a Neighborhood Farm Program, which supplies gardeners with start-up kits, seeds, and other assistance. Some 10,000 kits are distributed each year throughout the city.

Applications are available at any of the department's nine community service centers.

A number of other resources are available to people seeking to start or maintain gardens. The Chicago Botanic Garden helps organizations in obtaining garden sites, supplies, and water. The Open Lands Project offers training to neighborhood groups interested in acquiring, developing, and managing vacant lots for gardens, playlots and other improvements. The University of Illinois' Cooperative Extension Service works with the city's Department of Human Services, the Chicago Botanic

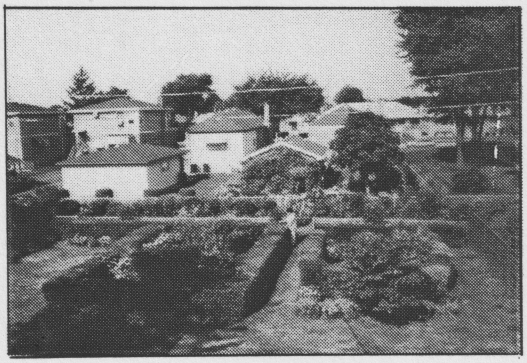
Garden, and other organizations to provide seminars, pamphlets, and other assistance to urban gardeners.

For more information on these programs, contact:

Neighborhood Farm Program
Department of Human Services
City of Chicago
744-7299

Chicago Botanic Garden
Glencoe, Illinois
835-5440

Open Lands Project
Chicago, Illinois
427-4256



Mayor Harold Washington's annual Neighborhood Garden Contest winner Michalena Lakauskas, whose beautification work includes an unused alley.

How to restore vacant public land to private ownership

The Department of Housing's Adjacent Neighbors Land Acquisition Program (ANLAP) sells certain city-owned residential lots, at a reduced cost, to owner-occupants of houses on adjacent parcels. The 1981 city ordinance that created ANLAP was amended in 1983 to relax the restrictions on lot sizes and locations.

To speed up sales, the housing department's real estate office in 1985 revamped program procedures to allow prescreening of applicants and quicker processing of bids. Also, for the first time, lists of available properties were made available to neighborhood organizations and prospective purchasers.

The Department of Housing also has simplified the sales process for non-ANLAP properties. It has done so through the limited use of a "negotiated sale" procedure that circumvents the need for sealed bids and through closer cooperation with the City Council's Land Disposition Committee.

For more information on the ANLAP program contact:

Real Estate Office
Department of Housing
City of Chicago
922-7922, ext. 600

How to prevent additional, unwanted vacant land

The Washington administration has made a substantial commitment to preserving the city's viable existing housing. Consequently, there are now fewer opportunities for vacant land to develop.

In 1985, the city's Department of Housing established the Housing Abandonment Prevention Program (HAPP). This program works directly with neighborhood organizations to identify potential problem buildings and to help owners and tenants keep these units viable. In order to prevent buildings with low-income tenants from being vacated, the housing department provides emergency loans to property owners. At the same time, the city helps to prepare long-term rehabilitation plans for the building. As of June 1986, $1.6 million in loans had been used for 57 buildings, totaling more than 1,200 units.

The City's Housing Abandonment prevention program is complemented by long-term rehabilitation projects and loans. As of June 1986, $1.6 million in loans were used for over 1,200 units.

The city's housing department also has worked with neighborhood groups in pumping more money into the rehabilitation and construction of multi-family housing. For example, a $10 million rental rehab grant program helped rehabilitate 1370 housing units in 1985, over half of them with the aid of community development organizations. Such efforts have resulted in the addition of some 18,000 units to the city's usable housing stock since 1983.

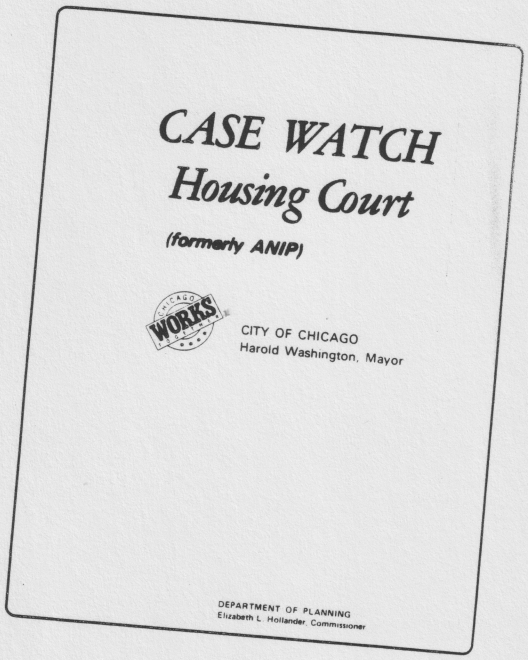
Another innovative public/private program is the Chicago Energy Savers Fund, sponsored jointly by the Department of Housing and Peoples Gas. The fund provides low-interest loans to single- and multi-family property owners who wish to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings. Priority is given to low- and moderate-income owners as well as buildings offering units that are affordable to lower-income tenants.

For more information on either HAPP or the Energy Savers Fund, contact:

Department of Housing
City of Chicago
922-7922, ext. 559

How to inform community groups about deteriorated or abandoned buildings

The Department of Planning has established an outreach program that provides information on Building Court cases to neighborhood organizations. The Case Watch Program, formerly the Affirmative Neighborhood Information Program, offers information that helps organizations track the progress of enforcement actions against problem buildings and landlords in their neighborhoods. These data, which are compiled from city files and official court records, include reports on building violations, lists of individuals against whom court actions are pending, and monthly housing court calendars.



Organizations interested in participating in the program should contact:

Case Watch, Housing Court Program
Department of Planning
City of Chicago
744-4455

What to do about blighted, multi-family housing

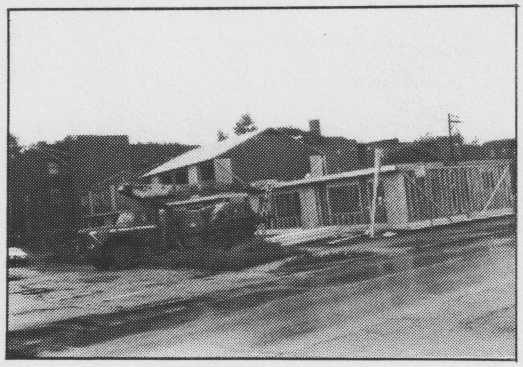
Cook County's Office of Economic Development has instituted a program to assist neighborhood development organizations in rehabbing blighted, tax-delinquent multi-family buildings. Under the Multi-Family Tax Reactivation Program, neighborhood groups can acquire these types of buildings at the county's scavenger sale, without cost. The program enables the county to purchase properties through a "non-cash bid." The buildings can then be conveyed to non-profit organizations or joint public/private ventures that have secured rehab financing.

For more information contact:

Office of Economic Development
Cook County
443-4892

How to encourage home ownership for single-family housing

The city assists prospective homebuyers directly through the Chicago Affordable Mortgage Program. The program, which offers low-interest mortgages through local lenders, is targeted at low-income and first-time homebuyers. It is funded by the city through mortgage revenue bonds.



For more information contact:

Department of Housing
City of Chicago
922-7922 ext. 642

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